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August 6, 2009

Jonathan Greeley, Planner
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Comments on Proposed Temporary Re-use of 1282 Boylston Street

Dear Jonathan:

We are writing to comment on the current plans for temporary re-use of 1282 Boylston Street, the former McDonalds restaurant site. We submit this letter on behalf of the CDC, a 36-year-old community-based organization that builds and preserves affordable housing and champions local projects that engage our full community in enhancing the neighborhood's diversity and vitality. These comments reflect a review of the proposal against our Urban Village Plan, the CDC's vision for the neighborhood as a smart-growth-oriented community that welcomes the broadest spectrum of residents. The plan sets goals in several key areas, including access to public transportation and reduced vehicular traffic.

The transportation section of the Urban Village Plan makes clear that the neighborhood's vision is for less parking over time, especially non-accessory parking that is unrelated to any other use on the lot. The plans for temporary re-use of the former McDonalds lot as parking are understandable in the current economic climate. Still, we would like to see the Abbey Group, which will soon own the property, do its best to mitigate the negative impact that additional parking will have on the residents who live nearby. Given that leasing the McDonalds building to another tenant is not an option, the developer should consider other creative solutions. As you mentioned at the July 1 public meeting, we support the idea of a farmer's market during the warmer months on days when the parking lot is not full. We strongly encourage the Abbey Group to work with Fenway CDC to implement such a market for the 2010 season.

Landscaping on the site should shield the parking from adjacent apartment buildings as well as from the sidewalks on Boylston and Jersey streets. The existing trees along the periphery of the lot should be maintained. There should be an attractive buffer along both street edges, whether it consists of enhanced landscaping or a berm. A fence may be acceptable if it is low to the ground and made of attractive materials. The sidewalks and lot edges should be as pedestrian-friendly as possible, in keeping with the guidelines articulated in the Fenway-Longwood-Kenmore Transportation Action Plan.

In the longer term, we would like the Abbey Group and the BRA to work closely with the community to develop a plan for a building on this lot that the neighborhood can be proud of.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Soli
Interim Executive Director

David Holtzman
Planner